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IRAQ CEREMONY BRINGS TOGETHER TWO SERGEANTS MAJOR WHO STARTED CAREERS TOGETHER IN 1977

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FORWARD OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, Iraq -- When the 4th Brigade of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division passed its mission here on to the 42nd Aviation Brigade, the ceremony was also a reunion for two aviation sergeants major who started their Army careers side by side nearly 30 years ago.

Sgts. Maj. David Thompson and Johnny Reynolds first met at Fort Knox, Ky. when they soldiered through basic training there in the summer of 1977. Their paths crossed again here February 2, during the relief in place ceremony that passed the mission here from Thompson's Task Force Danger to Reynolds' Task Force Liberty.

The reunion gave time for the two sergeants major to reflect on their careers.

They both "fondly" remembered their drill sergeant, one Sgt. Guilzey. The memory of their Guilzey still drew a shudder, a chuckle and a wag of the head from the two seasoned NCOs.

"The other drill sergeants actually felt sorry for us," said Thompson. "Drill Sgt. Guilzey was kind of short, but he would get right in your face. His campaign hat would hit right at my eye level."

It wasn't the kinder, gentler Army you hear joked about today, Reynolds added.

Though they said the rigorous schedule of training left little time for much more free time than eating and sleeping, both sergeants major remember training with a great team.

"We had a good group of guys," Reynolds said of his fellow trainees.

After basic training Thompson and Reynolds took different paths. Thompson, who serves in 4th Brigade, started in the infantry, later switched to air traffic control, and then to aviation. Reynolds, a 42nd Brigade Soldier, has served in aviation throughout his career. Both saw duty in Operation Desert Storm, as well as in the same brigade at Fort Hood, Texas.

"It all paid off, and we have survived it," Reynolds said. "I set a goal to do 30 years, and after this assignment I should have it."

"This whole place has been like an aviation reunion," said Capt. Timothy A. Campbell of the 8th Battalion, 229th Aviation Regiment of his deployment experience. "You never know who you will run into."



